

Duyvesteyn's study raises at least two questions. One concerns a possible cultural bias of the analytical tool employed, and the other relates to the implications of the book's conclusions for humanitarian intervention and the building of a democratic world order. Is the trinitarian model really applicable to developing societies whose state-formation processes were interrupted both by colonial imperialism and the strictures of a cold war world order? Are African states really in the line of succession of their Western Westphalian counterparts?

As to the implications for humanitarian intervention, if African civil wars are "normal" struggles for power (or normal politics by other means), might such interventions, harking back to Westphalian norms, not represent undue interference in internal political processes? It seems to this reviewer that the humanitarian emergencies spawned by so-called African wars (as indeed by intrastate wars beyond Africa) take these conflicts to a whole other level. One cannot simply attribute to a normal quest for power unorthodox warfare that results in human suffering (within and beyond state borders) on such massive scales. The purpose of their perpetrators must be both criminal and political. And while state players remain central to understanding African wars, the international recognition of the inalienable rights of their citizens is not negligible.

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**Karl von Holdt. *Transition from Below: Forging Trade Unionism and Workplace Change in South Africa*.** Pietermaritzburg: University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2003. Distributed by International Specialized Book Services, Inc., 920 NE 58th Avenue, Suite 300, Portland, Ore. 97213-3786. iii + 325 pp. Bibliography. Index. No price reported. Paper.

If there is a single book that is essential for understanding the transition from apartheid and delineating the contours of contemporary South Africa, this is it. The place of trade unions in the South African "transition" has evoked a plethora of scholarly analyses, based on debates among elites and operating at a high level of empirical and/or theoretical abstraction. There are some who have criticized COSATU for failing to push the ANC in a socialist direction; others blame the ANC for having sold out its constituents by toadying up to the neoliberal policies of international capital. In both cases, COSATU tends to be evoked as a unified actor, taking its place as a potential progressive brake on the ANC. Even informed observers of the situation, however, find themselves at a loss for reliable bearings from which to comprehend limits and pressures at the grassroots. For such persons, this book will be invaluable.

*Transition from Below* is a theoretically rigorous extended case study

based on workers' own accounts of struggles in one large steel factory from the 1970s until 1996. Its conclusions may be usefully extended to provide insight not only into the demise of apartheid but also into the structural contradictions haunting class formation and class struggle in the new South Africa.

As a longtime editor of the *South African Labour Bulletin* and committed socialist, Karl von Holdt earned the trust of steelworker shop stewards, who willingly shared with him their deepest concerns. No other source so clearly conveys the difficulties and temptations faced by union leaders as the apartheid workplace regime was challenged and transformed, through an intense and violent period of "ungovernability," into a new era of reconstruction. Even those who retained an unswerving commitment to democracy had to make impossible choices. They were forced to juggle political responsibilities in local township governance with efforts to restore workplace productivity through "strategic unionism," while at the same time continuing to represent worker interests. Divisions within the union that had arisen during the period of ungovernability emerged yet again as the drive for productivity led to reorganization and retrenchments, dividing informed shop stewards from ordinary workers. Those who opted to try to bring union traditions of democracy to local and provincial councils confronted both manipulative white officials and new ANC cadres with top-down powers on the lookout for easy pickings. At the same time, reforming managements offered tempting openings for union leaders committed to joint decision-making in the new drive for productivity. Processes of new class formation created insoluble dilemmas for union leaders while reducing worker solidarity and compromising union capacity. Structural limitations imposed by necessary involvement in the reconstruction effort itself thus help explain COSATU's apparent weakness in the new South Africa. Von Holdt uncovers all these contradictions and more, unpacking their complexities in straightforward narrative style.

In the interests of full disclosure, I should add that I read this book in an earlier dissertation form. There is a blurb on the back from my examiner's report. The book is better than the thesis ever was, however. There are inevitably one or two problems. Von Holdt's unique access to the union meant that managers refused to talk to him. His account of management points of view is thus somewhat one-dimensional. Moreover, while von Holdt draws on a reading of my own theoretical perspective in describing "ungovernability," he pushes it further than I would want to go. As a result, he fails to explain how the factory ever managed to keep producing amidst the chaos of the ungovernability period. These are minor quibbles, however. This is a very important book. Unfortunately it has been published only in South Africa, but can be obtained in this country (see heading).

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